

Rural Health Care Access Program (RHCAP)

Program Definitions

Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA): A federal designation based on criteria established through federal guidelines to identify geographic areas, population groups, or facilities with access barriers to primary care services. Contact the State Office of Rural Health and Primary Care at ruralhealth@dhw.idaho.gov or 208-334-0669 for HPSA designation questions.

Medically Underserved Areas (MUA): A federal designation based on health and demographic indicators which are weighted to calculate the index of medical underservice, which is also established by federal regulation. MUA's describe areas of need for primary care resources on a relative basis. Contact the State Office of Rural Health and Primary Care at ruralhealth@dhw.idaho.gov or 208-334-0669 for MUA designation questions.

Primary care: the provision of professional comprehensive health services, including oral health care services, that includes health education and disease prevention, initial assessment of health problems, treatment of acute care and chronic health problems, and the overall management of an individual's or family's health care services as provided by an Idaho licensed internist, obstetrician, gynecologist, pediatrician, family practitioner, general practitioner, dentist, dental hygienist, nurse practitioner or physician assistant. It provides the initial contact for health services and referral for secondary and tertiary care.

Improving access to healthcare: includes removing barriers that prevent people from obtaining healthcare, strengthening healthcare systems, and developing partnerships to better serve communities. Examples of barriers may include socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic factors, or an inadequate availability of practitioners.

Eligible grant categories:

Recruitment and retention of primary care providers: Grant funds may be used for loan repayment for primary care providers, recruitment incentive, and/or reimbursement of relocation expenses for primary care providers. Loans that qualify for repayment include educational loans obtained while the primary care practitioner received medical training or education. Credit card debt, non-educational loans, and loans obtained for non-medical education expenses do not qualify for this grant. Individuals may not apply for RHCAP funds on their own behalf.

Telehealth projects: Grant funds may be used for projects that involve the use of telecommunications technologies for distance learning and for projects to improve access to care for rural communities. Telehealth projects must have a primary care focus and must be administered or utilized by a primary care practitioner. Not more than 40% of a project proposal may be designated for equipment. Applications that propose capital equipment purchases exceeding the 40% requirement will be disqualified.

Community development projects: Grant funds may be used for health needs assessments, marketplace analysis, financial analysis, and strategic planning activities. These projects aim to improve health care through in-depth analysis of supply utilization, existing resources, and extensive community planning. Assessment services may pave the way for communities to better understand who they serve, the specific needs of the community, and the importance of improved coordination of local health care services. Community development projects are diverse and should focus on issues that are important to a community.

Other activities related to improving health care access: Communities may create innovative programs to improve access to primary medical and dental health care based on the community's individual needs.